Christian Nyampeta

"In the Black Color of the Night": Theology and Philosophy in Exile

A Visit to Lubumbashi

In December 2018, I visited Lubumbashi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at the invitation of my colleagues at the Centre d'art Waza.[1] In our conversations with Lushois philosophers of varying generations, we reflected on questions of a somewhat oedipal nature: Despite the noted philosophical achievements originating in this region, why did the atrocities in Rwanda and Congo happen "on your watch"? In which ways did you and your elder philosophers fall short in anticipating and preventing the emergence and the recurrence of violence on such a scale?

My mind was orbiting around the gravity of the year 2019, which marks the twenty-fifth commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi.[2] This Genocide can be read as a metonymy for a wider self-destruction in the world at large. Perhaps the genocide against the Tutsi is inscribed in a history of world barbarism, a genocidal humanism that marks our epoch. It's an era in which crisis is the norm rather than the exception, an *afterlife* that violently produces a memory of *before*, propelling life into an *after*.[3] If so, the Genocide against the Tutsi points to the limit of rationality as it was known before its advent. Philosophy reached a limit: by not foreseeing, by being silent during, and by offering a belated response to this Genocide. If Thought reached a limit then, even within the minds of the most esteemed of African thinkers, in what way are we, their mere students, equally failing to rise to the demands of our history now? If genocidal politics is the norm, what are the ongoing genocides and how do we intervene?

In response, philosopher Emmanuel Banywesize took off his glasses, scratched his head, and noted the confronting tone of my questions: Was I indiscriminately accusing entire generations of Rwandan and Congolese scholars of being bad parents? Banywesize set out to elaborate on the historical contexts of his generation's philosophical formation. Then he pointed out the conceptual difficulties facing his colleagues of previous generations. For Banywesize, it might be true that earlier philosophers slacked in committing to the burning questions of their times. These included the analysis of the impact of popular cultures on society, studying the domestic realm and its gendered violences, the role of minor figures such as street hawkers and market women in the functioning of the economy, etc. But also, for instance, he could not cite a single text about exile authored by a Rwandan or Congolese philosopher between 1950 and 1997.[4] And yet, exile was central to the recurrent violence that continually flared regionally.[5] For philosophers at the time, not reading or writing about exile was

the result of the dangers of addressing problems of the locale from within the conditions of oppressive regimes. Additionally, Banywesize suggested, the received disciplinary philosophical wisdom of the time didn't provide many antecedents for confronting exile socially. Avoiding such subjects was an orderly application of the disciplinary tradition of philosophy. This absence of working from the experiences of life on the ground resulted in a condition whereby it was only possible to write metaphysically. This discursive limitation is severe, because crucial subjects affecting society – particularly the increasingly ethnicized definitions of citizenry and subjecthood devoid of class – remained outside of the questioning of education, policy making, and other fields which, arguably, fall under the responsibility of scholarship. Instead, the theorists withdrew into ethnophilosophical metaphysics, a field which itself became a form of intellectual exile.

Intertwined Histories of Christianity and Philosophy in the Great Lakes Region

Modern and contemporary philosophy in Rwanda owes its formation to Catholic Christianity. American historian Timothy Longman narrates how the first Catholic missionaries arrived in

Rwanda in 1900, and how they committed themselves to becoming major political agents. The Society of Missionaries of Africa – better known as the White Fathers – reached Rwanda from neighboring Burundi, where, after several failed attempts, they had just succeeded in establishing their first mission near Bujumbura in 1898. "Two years later, in February 1900, the first White Fathers arrived at the Rwandan capital in Nyanza to request permission to begin mission work in Rwanda." Rwanda fell under the missionary authority of Monsignor Jean-Joseph Hirth, the apostolic vicar of the vast geographic region comprising Congo, Rwanda, and Urundi, then known as Nyanza Meridional. Hirth wished to establish his mission near Burundi: this location was advantageous for the mission as it was "heavily populated"; it was situated near supply stations in Burundi; and it was near the royal seat. After overcoming royal resistance, a site was granted to the mission on Save, and "within a year, the king granted two other stations, Zaza in the east near the Tanganyika border and Nyundo in the north, and two years later another northern mission was founded at Rwaza and one in the southwest, Mibirizi."[6] According to Longman, some attributes "that marked mission work in Rwanda from the
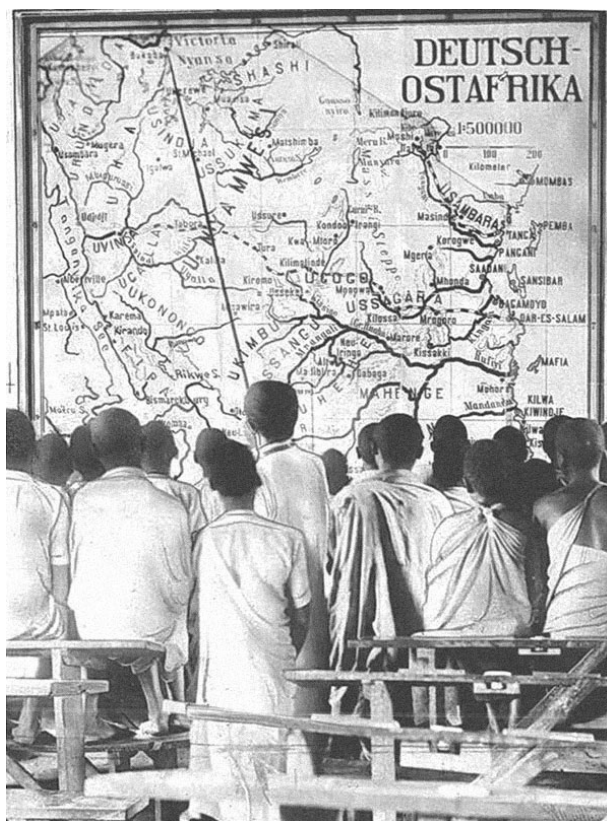
"Teaching materials such as maps were introduced to the missionary schools in Rwanda under German colonial rule. In this photo, a pupil points at Bukoba on the map." Courtesy of the Archive of the White Fathers, Cologne. Published in Hans-Ulrich Duwendag and Wolfgang Völker, *Ruanda und die Deutschen: Missionare als Zeitzeugen der Kolonialgeschichte* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

beginning appear in hindsight to have shaped indelibly the nature of Christianity in Rwanda." For one, the missionary emulation of the conversion of Emperor Constantine in Rome led Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, founder of the Missionaries of Africa, to believe that "once the chiefs and kings were converted, they would create an accommodating environment for the conversion of the masses and that where tension existed between missionaries and civil authorities, the church would never develop a firm footing."[7]

Longman writes that

> the success of the strategy of building up political power and developing strong alliances with state leaders (success in terms of rates of conversion and ease of operation for the church) led church officials in subsequent decades to seek to maintain a close alliance with the state. The value placed on popular obedience to civic authorities and the acceptance of church involvement in ethnic politics have also shaped subsequent church social engagement in Rwanda.

This is due in part to the ethnic interpretation

given by the missionaries to Rwandan power relations. This understanding led them to

> set as their primary goal gaining the support and ultimately the conversion of the ruling class, necessitating that the missionaries consciously avoided defending the interests of the masses against their chiefs, for fear that the chiefs would view them as rivals for power.

At first, the missionaries failed in converting the royal court, and instead the missionaries focused on enrolling the youth of the ruling class into their education programs. They further relied "on the support of the [initially German] colonial state, particularly after the transfer to Belgian control in 1916," when "the missionaries eventually achieved their goal" in converting the royal court and thus achieving "the subsequent conversion of much of the populace."[8]

African philosophy inherited this Thomist tradition of missionary education, and to this day it sustains and preserves theological views on culture, society, education, and governance. According to Congolese philosopher Kasereka Kavwahirehi, "pioneers and contemporary leading figures of African philosophy [were
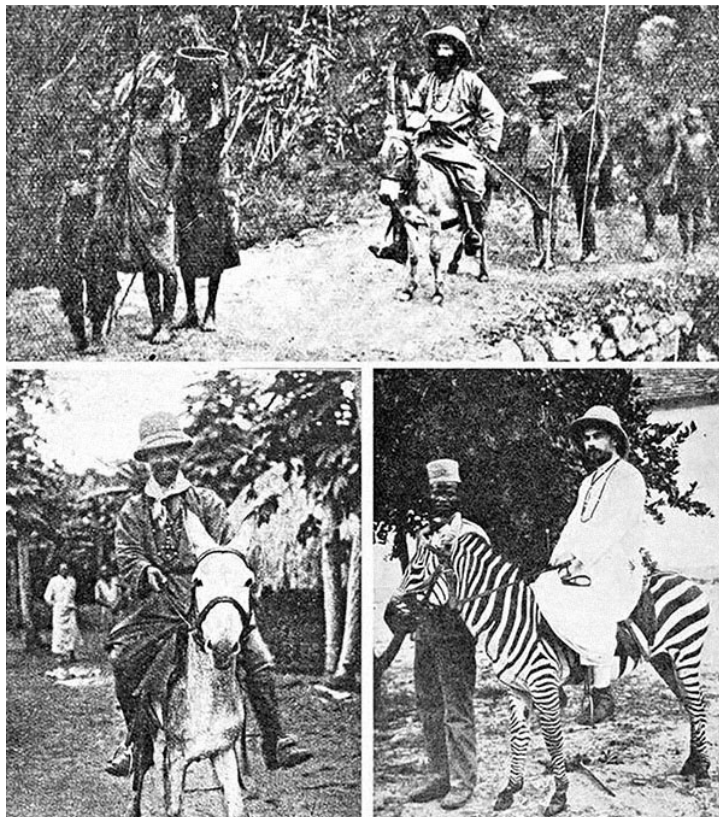
"Donkeys, mules, and zebras were the only four-legged means of transport to cover long distances in Rwanda. But sometimes it was also the back of a local. Distances were measured not in kilometers but in day trips, and moving up and down hills and wadding through swamps was everyday business for the missionaries during their expeditions." Courtesy of the Archive of the White Fathers, Cologne. Published in Hans-Ulrich Duwendag and Wolfgang Völker, *Ruanda und die Deutschen: Missionare als Zeitzeugen der Kolonialgeschichte* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

formed] in missionary institutions," and this stamp of Christianity onto the general regional and Rwandan intellect is still widely evident.[9] The dominant ideologies, the institutions they represent, and the types of social sciences privileged in education also reflect this Christian idealism.[10] It reaches back to the colonial era when churches, cloisters, and seminaries were established, as sites of ideological conversion.[11] However, this colonial enterprise of cultural conversion through Christianity "was appropriated by Africans who perceived it as a vehicle of modernity or found in it tools to resist colonialism and domination, that is, tools of liberation."[12] But still, missionary institutions were, and still are, technologies of transmission and enforcement of colonial exploitation. Writing in 1979, the then-priest and now-Archbishop Smaragde Mbonyintege attested that:

> The missionary activities had a common goal with that of the colonisers. For Rwandans, to become a Christian was not only a matter of conversion to Christianity: it was a total act of abandoning "imico ya kinyarwanda," the Rwandan rhythms, which were suspected, rightly or wrongly, to be vectors of paganism. Between 1900 and 1960, the Rwandan Christian moved toward a cultural death. Through the Christian religion, the new Rwandan Christian was formed at school, at work, to become an admirer of the White, and to become his often clumsy imitator. Becoming a Christian meant speaking differently, eating differently, dressing differently, praying differently. More dramatically, becoming Christian meant to hate one's own tradition and to admire all what is European.[13]

I want to suggest that despite this devastating effort to make Christianity the rhythm of modernity,[14] what is properly African was not fully erased. Also, the appropriation, adaptation, and cultivation of Christianity by the new African Christians led to a distinct emergence of an African Christianity and modernity that used the same arguments to fight against colonial injustice. But other thinkers find that the civil wars, genocides, and massacres "that plague Africa today are signs of an anaemic political sphere" that is a product of foreign institutions enforcing an external order on African societies.[15]

In the meantime, Christianity, "which arrived in Africa within the colonial context of
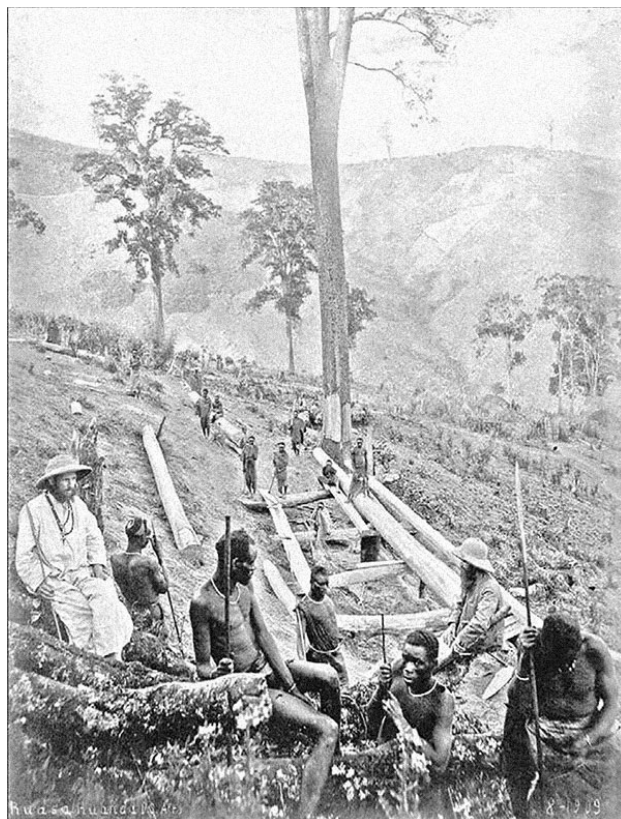
"This picture was probably taken by Brother Alfred (or by Father Dufays?) near Ruaza in August 1909. It shows the cutting down of trees after their bark had been peeled a few week before. Dr. Richard Kandt [the first 'resident' of Rwanda] felt that this slow killing of trees was unethical and wrote about it in his bestseller *Caput Nili: Eine Empfindsame Reise Zu Den Quellen Des Nils* (1904)." Courtesy of the Archive of the White Fathers, Cologne. Published in Hans-Ulrich Duwendag and Wolfgang Völker, *Ruanda und die Deutschen: Missionare als Zeitzeugen der Kolonialgeschichte* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

subjugation and domination," is now "profoundly linked to the African experience of history in its multiple manifestations: spiritual, social, political, ethical and intellectual."[16] Therefore, "all analysis of African issues that does not take into account the Christian (or Islam) factor as well as African religious systems ends up by renouncing an understanding of African societies' dynamics."[17] The institution of Christianity erased the Rwandan rhythms, *imico ya Kinyarwanda*, such that Christianity caused the cultural death of the Rwandan ways of being in the world, decimating existing life practices that didn't separate "its expression in social action, nor readily classified as theological, political, or sociological."[18] Christianity was deployed as "a powerful tool for the transformation of physical and human spaces," and "as an institution of domestication of bodies and minds, forcing integration into a manner of being, living and thinking presented as the actualisation of a revealed Word, and as the truth and norm of all authentic existence."[19]

For some thinkers, this fragmentation explains, in part, the extraordinary flare-up in civil wars and atrocities in Africa in recent years. According to the Congolese priest and philosopher Bénézet Bujo, "In the genuine

African tradition, the genocide in Rwanda would be impossible. Palaver and rites of reconciliation in the name of the ancestors would ensure that the worst would be avoided and peace re-established." Perhaps "the recognised or concealed genocides, massacres, intercommunity clashes, rape and violence, are … signifiers of the obvious failure"[20] of modernity, Christianity, and other rhythmic apparatuses enforced upon Africans by colonial governments of before and their contemporary military technocratic surrogates.

Although African Christendom and its Rwandan variants have developed new idioms that are no longer identical to Roman Christianity, Christendom remains an ideological instrument that is central to the formation of the subject in all aspects of education. Even more so, Christianity and philosophy are linked, and both take on more importance under conditions of recurring violence. As we know, the Genocide against the Tutsi is unique, but sadly, violence as such is not a single event, it's a recurring condition that attempts to take hold of life. This recurrence means that philosophy only becomes necessary over time, since violence is never consigned to a single event in time. Violence continually ruptures time. "Philosophy" may be
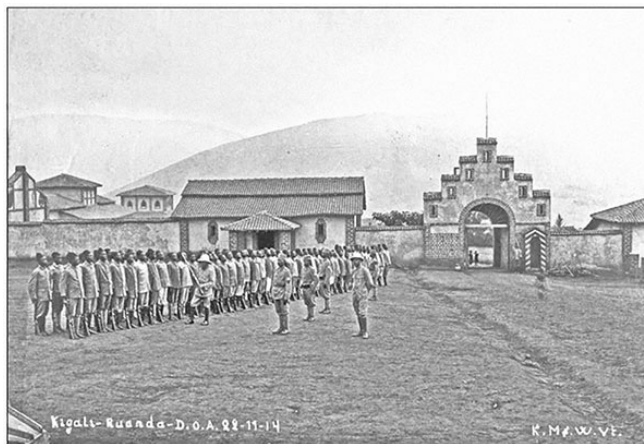
Brother Privatus Jakob Brauchle during basic training in Kigali on November 22, 1914. Courtesy of the Archive of the White Fathers, Cologne. Published in Hans-Ulrich Duwendag and Wolfgang Völker, *Ruanda und die Deutschen: Missionare als Zeitzeugen der Kolonialgeschichte* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

continually called upon to account for, to understand, and to come to terms with these ruptures: a rupture that was, and the rupture that is coming. A rupture, an exile, is always ahead as well as behind. Philosophy seems to be even more necessary under such conditions.

Interdictory Exiles of Philosophy

Philosopher Isaïe Nzeyimana jokes about how he is often reproached for being a philosopher.[21] "It's so difficult!" complains public opinion. Nzeyimana retorts that philosophy is difficult because life is difficult! Philosophy is but the narration of the world, and if living was easy, philosophy would be as well. But the type of Christianity that gave form to philosophy in former colonies is a practice of interdictory exiles, symbolized by withdrawal from society, embodied in its demands for seminaries, convents and monasteries. On the one hand, philosophy in the Great Lakes region of Africa labored under political, moral, ethical, and disciplinary interdictions. Some of these interdictions were external to philosophy – for instance, the political conditions at the time, exemplified by the oppressive regimes of Juvenal Habyarimana (Rwanda) and Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire/Congo). But on the other hand, philosophy already understood itself as an interdictory discourse: it was a form of knowledge forbidden to be studied in "ordinary life." But also, it prohibited itself to write about this "ordinariness," which, in hindsight, was a continual crisis. Philosophy's role, then, was to analyze philosophy from within devotional segregation. The predominant role of philosophical practices had been to elucidate particular moments in canonical works by Gabriel Marcel, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, or from the perspective of Thomist philosophers.[22]

During the period of postindependence until the Rwandan genocide (1959–94), these external and internal interdictions forced philosophy into a metaphysical domain. At first, philosophy saw itself as "ethnophilosophy." This is an ethnographic effort concerned with the aim of asserting the existence of "rationality" in African cultures, as an undertaking opposing the then-dominant European discourse which justified the "civilizing missions" partly on the account of the absence of reason in Africans.[23] Gradually, philosophy became an impenetrable metaphysical empire which saw itself as the master discourse, the discourse of all discourses. In so doing, philosophy suffered from a principled impotence, by forbidding itself dialogue with its outside. While philosophizing socially might have been prohibited by political authorities of that time, philosophy's own disciplinary heritage equally prohibited itself

from undertaking exterior analysis. This self-exiling aspect or "strangeness" of philosophy has been expressed in various ways across time. Political theorist Terence Ball asserts that philosophers were "often outsiders, even complete strangers," albeit "in a rather special sense":

> The citizens of [the] *polis* regarded his activity as an alien activity, though for quite different reasons than citizens of present-day America might give. For, if "being a man" was synonymous with being an active participant in the life and affairs of the city, the theorist was only half a man; or, rather, part human and part something else. His activity of contemplation, unlike that of politics, was not wholly of this world; it had, both Plato and Aristotle agreed, an element of divinity about it.[24]

Writing further on this "strangeness" of philosophy, Ball suggests:

> Plato made much of Socrates' *daemon*, with which the latter consorted while in trance-like states, and which advised him to stay out of politics. Elsewhere Plato emphasises the loneliness, the privacy (*idion*) bordering on madness, of the contemplative life. He even suggests that theorising means taking leave of life, a kind of separation or death. These themes run through Plato, especially, as a *leitmotif* or better, perhaps, as a defence, the theorist's own *apologia pro vita sua*. There is a poignant and moving passage in the *Republic*, in which Plato has Socrates justify his abstention from political life. His abstention is not that of a coward or shirker of his rightful duty; it has a lonely, heroic quality about it. Socrates laments the fallen state of politics, which he has observed, as it were, from the outside. "One who has weighed all this keeps quiet and goes on his way, like the traveller who takes shelter under a wall from a driving storm of dust and hail; and seeing lawlessness spreading on all sides, is content if he can keep his hands clean from iniquity while life lasts …" This outpouring of bitterness, leavened only by a sense of resignation to fate, seems to betoken an antipolitical sentiment of the strongest kind. And yet bitterness immediately gives way to a sentiment which is political in character.

> Both Plato and Aristotle emphasise the alien or foreign character of *theoria* or

contemplation. In his later dialogues the image of the "stranger" is that of the theorist. In the *Statesman*, the *Laws* and the *Sophist*, for example, the "stranger," who has traveled far and seen much, is the central figure. In casting the theorist as a stranger, Plato deliberately heightens and dramatises the "foreign" character of the theorist, who is given no name, age, or any significant attributes other than his vocation or "way" (*aporie*). In an almost Jungian fashion, Plato reduces the theorist, as stranger, to an archetypal figure.[25]

Aristotle wonders "which way of life is more desirable – to join with other citizens and share in the state's activity, or to live in it like an alien, absolved from the ties of political society?"[26] There are significant differences between Plato's alienated philosopher and the theorist envisioned by Aristotle. For Aristotle, the theoretical life can more readily exist independently of the political. Politics and philosophy are two "ways." It is not necessary, nor would it be desirable, to subordinate one to the other. In contrast, concerning the role of the individual and political action, and the foundations of democracy, Plato finds freedom to

be the defining characteristic of democracy. Democracy facilitates the *koinon*, "the sharing of friends, property, and family." But also, democracy should encourage the development of a world of one's own.[27]

"Hereditary" philosophy has thus long contemplated the merits or downfalls of removing itself from the world. But so did vocational Christianity, out of which the educational missionary institutions issued. From the French literary critic Roland Barthes we learn that in the period starting from the first century of our era and culminating in the fourth century, a significant number of individuals gradually left their societies behind and made their way into the desert of Egypt. These men and women became ascetics, hermits, and later, monks and clergymen and -women. To this day, some of them are referred to by the church and Christians across the globe as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. This phenomenon is also found outside of theology. In English, the word hermit (ερημίτης) derives its meaning from ἔρημος, *érēmos*, and ἐρῆμος, erêmos: "Greek" and Attic words for "desert." The English word "desertion" also originates from the literal meaning of going to the desert. This period surrounding the birth of Christianity was a time of pivotal

"Preparations in anticipation of the Belgian attack at Gisenyi in 1915. A Maxim machine gun and a 77 mm field cannon were deployed, but were later captured by the Belgians." Courtesy of the Archive of the White Fathers, Cologne. Published in Hans-Ulrich Duwendag and Wolfgang Völker, *Ruanda und die Deutschen: Missionare als Zeitzeugen der Kolonialgeschichte* (LIT Verlag, 2017).

transformations for the Roman Empire. Some of these ascetics, hermits, monks, and nuns were forced to seek exile from Roman military service, fleeing imperial taxes, heritage, or marriage.[28] But, even for those who had no social reason to flee other than desire, the desert had its own singular attraction:

> [The desert] was both the place where God is to be found – here the classic prototype was Moses, who met God face to face in the desert of Sinai – and at the same time it was the place where the demons dwell. The second meaning is vividly emphasised in the *Life of Antony*: as Antony withdraws into the desert, he hears the demons shouting, "Depart from our territory. What business have you here in the desert?" So the solitary, in withdrawing into the desert, has a double aim: to meet God and to fight the demons. In both cases the ascetic is not being selfish, and the purpose is not to escape but to encounter. The ascetic goes out to discover God and to achieve union with the divine through prayer; and this is something that helps others. Equally the ascetic goes out to confront the demons, not running away from danger but advancing to meet it; and this also is a way of helping others. Because, the devil with whom the ascetic enters into combat is the common enemy of all humankind.[29]

Like Christianity itself, these desert Christian formations were composed of philosophies, belief systems, and life practices from Northern, Southern, and Eastern origins, alongside influences from Hebraic, "Greek," and Roman traditions. However, this theological mixing receded at the moment of division between East and West, which occurred around the collusion of Christianity with the Roman Empire in 380, following the edict of Theodosius. Particularly in the new "West," the ascendance and centralization of Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire resulted in the gradual "ordering" of all ascetic life practices into "cenobitic" monasteries. This making of "order" marginalized and criminalized most other types of ascetic life, in the Egyptian desert and elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Instead, the cenobitic monastery became the model institution of subject formation and ethical governance, and the "desert" became an interior state. Because the ascetic and hermit were fighting against the "demon" symbolized by the desert, this "demon" remained the enemy against which the monastic infrastructure defended. Perhaps, then, there remains a demonological defensiveness to Western

institutions modelled after the monastery, including missionary schools. Despite the enormous temporal distances – historical transformations and geographic expanses – the seminaries and convents in former Western colonies could exemplify some of the material legacies of these early Christian cenobitic histories.

In any case, naming, accounting, and defining levels of social commitment is thus an age-old concern of paramount importance in both philosophy and theology. In Rwanda, it's as if philosophy placed an obligation on those who would study it to give up on anything other than philosophy, by entering the seminary or convent. Once inside, the philosophical canon is predefined as the only meaning of value. This pre-agreement makes the motions of thought turn into a predefined circle.

Theoretical Limits of Narrating Life in the Afterlife

If that is the case, I am of course unable to trespass the horizon of such a circle; I am hardly qualified to author a work of political science, conflict resolution, peace studies, nor philosophy. Even if I were, there would be a horde of theoretical limits opposing my passage. For instance, how to speak against violence from a "complicit" position of that same violence? What disciplinary strategies can address such complicit narration?

A limit can give rise to a theoretical metaphor, which can in turn propose a certain "hyperbolic re-narrativization" of the problem at hand, "not only as pasts, but as futures." A limit, then, can be seen as a "necessity in the form of a certain finality, even when placed under the mark of death," which "may well be understood to yet always remain distended in its own possibility." In this sense, "a limit can only manifest through its other side: possibility. Limit, approached on the order of necessity itself, is still, always, thus already a thought of the future as possibility."[30] What possibility can arise from the limit of speaking against violence from within the position of complicity? Here I am writing "against" Christianity, and yet my name is Christian. I am quarrelling with philosophy, and yet I share most of my intellectual intimacy with Barthes and Nzeyimana. Barthes's biography is complicit in French imperialism: Barthes's grandfather Louis Gustave Binger was "the French explorer and colonial officer who claimed Côte d'Ivoire for France in the 1880s." Binger even "served for a time as the colony's governor, and lent his name to Bingerville, the city that remains named in his honor to this day."[31] Nzeyimana could be said to represent the general intellect formalized through a dual

World Philosophy Day, Kabgayi, Rwanda, January 23, 2019. Convened by Dr. Isaïe Nzeyimana and Christian Nyampeta. Organized by UNESCO, Kabgayi Philosophicum, and ARPHI.

Christian Nyampeta, *Comment vivre ensemble*, 2015, video still, 30 min, color, sound.

Thomist and Hegelian tradition. As outlined above, Christianity is a rationality that contributed to the false raciality at the heart of the Genocide against the Tutsi.[32] In addition, aspects of Hegel's work place him among the writers who were ideologists of the century-long crimes by committed Europeans against Africans, who became the object of economic exploitation in the form of slavery, the plunder of their natural resources, forced labor, and political subjection. These crimes were given literary accents by thinkers and ideologists, who conducted "a systematic campaign of denigration of the Black Race, so as to reduce its peoples to a sort of biological species that wanders like a somnambulist between human and animal."[33] Worse than material denigration, the "West" wanted "to kill Africans spiritually, by denying them the human quality of exercising their intellectual faculties." For, "it's less serious for a people to be exploited economically than to be stripped of the quality of humanity in its own right and, above all, to be forced to believe oneself incapable of being anything other than slaves." Moreover, it's likely that "slavery and colonisation would not have occurred if the Europeans had not first achieved in their own psyche the step of reducing the quality of a humanity into those they wished enslaved or colonised." Concurrently, for the exploiters, "it was necessary to convince themselves that ultimately, their captives have no value other than that of a beast of burden or a simple instrument, in order not to have too bad a conscience while abusing them as such."[34]

Example of the Limit of Reason: Hegel's Concept of History

According to Rwandan philosopher Maniragaba Balibutsa,[35] Hegel contributed directly to this forcefully globalizing and dehumanizing reason. Hegel developed subdivisions of the epochs of universal history according to the peoples he wanted to privilege: universal history moves from the patriarchal Natural world, corresponding to the Eastern world, and ascends through to the Greek world, and then to the Roman world. History culminates in the Germanic era and the Christian world, when the spirit becomes autonomous.[36]

The Dehumanization of Life by Hegel

But for Hegel, Africa south of the Sahara is nowhere near any of the stages of universal history: "Africa represents a state of humanity still below the values that constitute History and Civilization." According to Balibutsa: "Hegel imposes upon Africans a set of very violent ideas … which can practically be summed up in one sentence: 'Black Africans represent a degree of

evolution of humanity still so low that we cannot talk about history, culture, the state, religion, social institutions in general.'" Africa is "'ahistorical'"; its "'humanity is in a state of barbarism and savagery'"; and "'it is the land of gold, folded onto itself, the country of childhood which, beyond the day of conscious history, remains wrapped in the black colour of the night.'"[37]

According to Balibutsa, Hegel's further elaborations on religion, human relations, and political constitution among Africans are "deeply violent," and in summary, "Hegel exiles Africans forever from the history of human culture, past, present, and future." Although Hegel's writings on this subject have long been demystified, it's not indulgent to revisit Hegel's views. "He formulated these from the stories narrated by slave traders, who needed to justify their inhuman behavior, and from the accounts of colonizers and missionaries who also needed to pretend to be heroes or saints in the mind of their peers who remained in Europe." Hegel's words about Africa "summarise the opinions of the 'white' world on us during these last centuries." They reflect the ideology of slavery, colonization, and missionary work, and their reality extends itself into the post-Genocide present.

Polyrationality and Intellectual Survival

How do Rwandan philosophers reconcile their existence as "Africans" with their intellectual affection towards Hegel's philosophy? Despite its violent stance towards Nzeyimana's own existence, how to account for his attraction to the German idealism Hegel professes, and Hegel's elaborations of a comprehensive and systematic philosophy from a purportedly logical starting point? This is an instance in which "what appears as a conflict of rationalities is probably only discomfort (on the part of those who are 'monorational')." Indeed, "polyrationality" is one of the effects of colonialism's imposition of Western methods onto Africa. Nzeyimana employs "his own" philosophical methods alongside "Western" ones, and his work encourages us to "shift back and forth between multiple models."[38] This is because current and historical violent realities have generated new experiences: Islam and Christianity are by now also African experiences; in the same way that, as Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne suggests, English, French, and Portuguese are also African.[39] Perhaps, then, Hegel is also "African"?

Regardless, the brutalities and extinctions committed in the name of "History," "modernism," and its "rationality" call for a complete rejection of its rhythms in African

societies, cultures, and politics. For instance, the possible benefits of Christianity throughout the Great Lakes region pale in comparison to the atrocities committed by missionaries and by Christian (and Muslim) African leaders and their willful or manipulated followers. And yet, in the wake of these terrible encounters, those tasked with subject formations are still Christians.

This contradiction embodies one of the challenges facing current and future generations of philosophers, educators, artists, policy makers, and other civic bodies: How and where to bury the ghosts of a defunct modernism and the ghosts of its victims? Now that Christianity has become "African," where to bury its African ghosts? The ghosts of our troubled histories have no resting place. Some are addressed as living, and others are buried in the wrong graves. The "Christian," the "French," the "English," the "Islamic," and the "African" now have ghosts in common, intertwined and fused. Burying a defunct Christianity would bury the living "African" with it, again in the wrong grave. How to ascribe proper graves to our common ghosts? Attending to this question could foreground a conflicted historical mutuality and reciprocity, in a way that implicates us, for example, in thinking negatively with Hegel or Christianity, in order to survive it all.[40]

Sharing Time, and Planting Trees

In January 2019, I co-convened a conference with Nzeyimana on the occasion of World Philosophy Day, an event organized annually by the National Commission of UNESCO, in collaboration with ARPHI (the Association Rwandaise des Philosophes). This year's theme was the relationship between art and philosophy, and it was hosted by the Grand Séminaire Philosophicum de Kabgayi St. Thomas Aquinas. Guests included Archbishop Smaragde Mbonyintege, Senator Laurent Nkusi, members of the philosophers' association, artists, and faculty from various universities. The majority of the guests were current students of the Grand Seminary, who are future priests. The conference was organized following what Nzeyimana and I call the "postcard method." In the preceding months, we visited artists and philosophers across the country, and we held recorded conversations with our hosts on themes of translation, memory, and education.[41] During the conference – with the use of two simultaneous projectors – we screened the results, with audio and video fragments on one projector, and highlights from the transcripts of our visits on the other. Nzeyimana livened up the room; a microphone circulated, and anyone present could pose questions or offer comments, opinions, and remarks. At one point, the

discussion was on how to define "art": What translational models are meaningful for such an understanding? Should the artist/philosopher follow the world's major tendencies, or should they invent solely from the contexts and "languages" of their own locale? Archbishop Mbonyintege remarked on how concerns about translation had already been considered by a generation before him. For instance, Abbé Alexis Kagame and Aloys Bigirumwami[42] represent respectively the school of translation and the school of interpretation. This generational repetition led Archbishop Mbonyintege to lament that contemporary artists lack "historical inspiration." The next speaker to request the microphone was a young artist and singer, one of the very few women present, who objected to the Archbishop's characterization of her generation. "Why do you consider the singers and artists of your time more inspired than us?" she asked. "Our experience of the world is vastly different from yours, and therefore our artistic delivery can't be the same. You may not like our forms, but you can't accuse us of not being inspired, and therefore, of not having any context." The Archbishop acquiesced and acknowledged the artist's sentiment. He then pointed out how her response might imply that she, and the youth she represents, live in a time entirely separate from the time in which the Archbishop and his colleagues live. "In truth," he said, "we all share the same time."

By way of conclusion, I return to my visit to the Lushois philosophers. Maybe Banywesize was discerning: unwittingly, I might have been "accusing" philosophy indiscriminately, in the same way that the Archbishop was questioning my generation's "artistic" contribution to society. The encounter between the artist and the philosopher involved "a language that holds us hostage, and yet we are the hostage takers."[43] It was a "logically absurd" moment that reaffirmed our own limits and contradictions.[44] Supposedly, one of the many "functions" of art is to heal the ruptures of history, and to "puncture" the membrane of the future, so as to render its advent felt in the present. In other words, the task of art is to invent a sense of shared time, across geographical expanses and ideological divides. Why do today's art, and philosophy, fail to achieve this? The underlying question is: Why can't "art" and "philosophy" prevent violence? Ultimately, artists and philosophers are reproaching each other for their failure to solve problems that belong to the fields of medicine, education, political science, architecture, history, design, engineering, psychology, anthropology, genocide studies, etc. Is it only art and philosophy that have failed in the face of the Genocide of the Tutsi? Haven't politics,

technology, science, journalism – the list is endless – also failed? What aspect of living doesn't face its limit in such a terrible encounter with death? I have no illusions that mere philosophers, or artists, can save the world! Why reproach the inadequacies of entire societies based solely on the ethics and aesthetics of two bodies of thought?

In 2015, during a conversation I had with philosopher Quinet Obed Niyikiza at his home in Huye for my film *Comment vivre ensemble*, he described philosophy as the mutual inventing of the tools needed for refusing misery. For him, one form this refusal takes is running a gardening association. Niyikiza's garden is an application of an idea attributed to German theologian Martin Luther. Reputedly, Luther said: "If I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would plant a tree." If there are survivors, then they would benefit from the fruits of that tree. The soundtrack to the harvest of such fruits is a song whose lyrics are our own critical elegy for our intellectual formation and inheritance as the formerly racialized and colonized, as modernists, postmodernists, Christians, and so on. If our life really resembles an afterlife, such an encounter between ethics and aesthetics could also take the form of a "self-autopsy" of our intellectual bodies. To perform such auto-optics – eye-witnessing or seeing for oneself – is to accept the burden of conversing outside of our languages, beyond our zones and times, as exiles of knowledge. It's writing or conversing as "exploratory surgery," as Algerian writer Christiane Chaulet-Achour describes *Bound to Violence*, the groudbreaking novel about Africa by Yambo Ouologuem.[45]

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A talk related to this essay was delivered at Exile: Art after Culture: A second decade of e-flux journal, a conference co-organized by Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art and *e-flux journal*, in collaboration with Erasmus University College and the Rotterdam Arts & Sciences Lab.

1
The context was a workweek, organized in the framework of research on the history of arts education in Lubumbashi and in Congo. These studies were undertaken in collaboration with a cluster of other working groups, as part of "Another Roadmap for Art Education," a network of educators, artists, and researchers from around the world, initiated by the Institute for Artistic Education, at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK. At the level of the African continent, working groups there included Johannesburg (Keleketla! Library and Wits), Kampala in Uganda, Nyanza/Huye in Rwanda, Maseru in Lesotho, and Cairo in Egypt. See: http://www.centredartwaza.org/?p=1949. Lubumbashi was once a significant location where a number of important philosophers studied, lived, and worked, most notably V. Y. Mudimbe, a Congolese philosopher, poet, and novelist concerned with the formations of African cultures and the continent's intellectual histories.

2
See: Genocide Archive Rwanda, http://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=History_of_the_Aegis_trust_archive_and_documentation. "In less than a hundred days, more than 800,000 Rwandese people were murdered in a deliberate and well-organized act of genocide, orchestrated by then-members of the Rwandan government. The genocidal regime targeted the Tutsi population and moderate Hutu who opposed the killings. Many Hutu and Twa also lost their lives as the genocide unfolded in the context of a civil war between the Hutu-dominated government and a Tutsi-dominated rebel movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The killings started on the 6th of April, following a rocket attack that caused a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi to crash. Despite the presence of a considerable UN peacekeeping force at the outbreak of the violence, the international community failed to intervene, pulling most of their forces out and ignoring any pleas for help. This failure to act allowed the killings to continue until the 4th of July, when Rwandan Patriotic Front forces, then led by the current president Paul Kagame, were able to take control of the country, ousting those responsible for the genocide from the country." African Study Centre, University of Leiden https://www.ascleiden.nl/news/seminar-25-years-after-rwandan-genocide.

3
Patrice Nganang, *Manifeste d'une nouvelle litterature africaine: pour une écriture préemptive* (Éditions Homnisphères, 2007), 36;

quoted in Michael Syrotinski, "The Post-Genocidal African Subject: Patrice Nganang, Achille Mbembe and the Worldlinesss of Contemporary African Literature in French", in *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and Littérature-monde*, eds. Alec G. Hargreaves, Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (Liverpool University Press, 2010), 274-86, 276.

4
Either because he doesn't know such a text, or because such a text doesn't exist, or because if it does, as is sure, it's not distributed widely enough to have reached the likes of him.

5
Mahmood Mamdani, *Understanding the Crisis in Kivu: Report of the CODESRIA Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo, September 1997* (CODESRIA), 2001.

6
Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press), 2009, 55-58.

7
Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*, 55-58.

8
Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*, 55-58.

9
Kasereka Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity? Or How violence in the Great Lakes Region Challenges Christianity and the Nation State," in *Citizenship Studies* 21, no. 2 (2017): 210–23. "From Placide Tempels, author of *La philosophie bantoue* (1945), to Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, author of *Muntu in Crisis: African Authenticity and Philosophy* (2014) and *Christianity without Fetishes: Revelation and Domination* (1981), and V.Y. Mudimbe's *Tales of Faith: Religion as Political Performance* (1997) through to *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être* (1956) by Alexis Kagame, *Visage africain du christianisme* (1965) by Vincent Mulago, and *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969) by John Mbiti, not to mention *L'Afrique dans l'Église: Paroles d'un croyant* by Engelbert Mveng, *Afriques indociles: Christianisme, pouvoir et État en société postcoloniale* (1988) by Achille Mbembe, and *Théologie africaine pour temps de crise* (1993) by Kä Mana … all these scholars bear witness to the challenges and issues born from extending to Africa a bourgeois Christian model of being. Hence, theologies of cultural identity, liberation or reconstruction, ethnophilosophy and critical philosophies represent moments when Africans try to recover coherence in their individual and collective lives by inscribing themselves in the open horizon of colonial modernity and the evangelising mission. This involves trying to

think critically about the integration of traditional values in the modern world while ensuring that modernity fulfils its promises within the African experience of history." p. 215.

10
Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 210-23.

11
Christian Nyampeta, *Comment vivre ensemble*, conversation with Dr. Fr. Fabien Hagenimana, September 2015.

12
Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 212.

13
Abbé Smaragde Mbonyintege, "L'urgence de l'inculturation du message chrétien dans la tradition rwandaise," in *Urunani* (Nyakibanda Seminary Press, 1979), 23–24. My translation from French.

14
My article "One's Own Rhythm" addresses Christianity as the rhythm of modernity. See Nyampeta, "One's Own Rhythm: Footnotes to How To Live Together," in *That, Around Which The Universe Revolves: On Rhythmanalysis of Memory, Times, Bodies in Space*, ed. Savvy Contemporary (Archive Books, forthcoming).

15
Bénézet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethics: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, trans. Brian McNeil (The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 96, quoted in Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 218. See also Jane Linden and Ian Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda* (Africana Publishing Company, 1997).

16
Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 212.

17
Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 212.

18
Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, *Christianisme sans fétiche: Révélation ou domination* (Christianity without Fetishes: Revelation or Domination) (Présence Africaine, 1981). Quoted in Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?"

19
Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 212.

20
Bénézet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethics*, 96. Quoted in Kavwahirehi, "Have we failed Christianity?" 212.

21
Nzeyimana cofounded and directed the former Nile Polytechnic of Applied Arts, an arts and architecture school located in Huye, Rwanda.

Nzeyimana is also a lecturer at the National University of Rwanda, also in Huye, and at the Grand Séminaire Philosophicum in Kabgayi, the only university with a philosophy department in Rwanda. Nzeyimana is the founder and director of ARPHI (Association Rwandaise pour la Philosophie). Nzeyimana's main philosophical contributions are in the field of education and political theory. His books are used as textbooks by Rwandan students in the humanities and social sciences. Some of these many books include: *Finalités de l'Éducation: essaie d'une anthropologie philosophique au Rwanda* (2000), *Philosophie et rationalités: philosophie de la connaissance, des sciences, de l'homme et de la société* (2010), *L'Afrique et son concept: Penser le développement de l'Afrique avec Hegel* (2017), and *Philosophie et rationalités Livre I: Introduction générale à la philosophie: Qu'est-ce la Philosophie?* (2018).

22
Examples of this interest include Joseph Kalinganire, *L'Autre face de la raison: principles odologiques de la rationalité bantu–rwandaise*, PhD thesis (Université de Fribourg, 1987); Fabien Hagenimana, *Le statut de l'altérité chez Joseph de Finance*, PhD thesis (Pontificia Universitas Sanctae Crucis, Philosophy Department, 2008); and Sylvestre Nzahabwanayo, *Authentic and Inauthentic Existence: Martin Heidegger versus Gabriel Marcel* (Lampert Academic Publishing, 2012).

23
Outstanding work on this topic was done by the late Alexis Kagame, a Rwandan philosopher, linguist, historian, poet, and Catholic priest born in Kiyanza in 1912. He died in 1981 in Nairobi. His primary philosophical contributions were in the field of ethnophilosophy. His main works are *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l'Être* (1956), an analysis of the concept of "Being" in Kinyarwanda and Rwandan culture; and *La Philosophie Bantu Comparée* (1976), a broader study including all the Bantu languages. In these works, Kagame attempts to demonstrate that the structure of Bantu languages reveals a complex ontology that is uniquely African in nature.

24
Terence Ball, "Theory and Practice: An Examination of the Platonic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Political Theory," *The Western Political Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (September 1972), 539-–40.

25
Ball, "Theory and Practice," 539–40.

26
Ball, "Theory and Practice," 539–40, quoting Aristotle, *Politics* 7. 2. § 3.

27
Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Democracy, Equality, and *Eidê*: A Radical View from Book 8 of Plato's Republic," *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 2 (June 1998): 273–83, 278.

28
Roland Barthes, *How To Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Living Spaces,* trans. Kate Briggs (Columbia University Press, 2013). "Idiorrhythmy," which means "one's own rhythm," is the subject of these lectures. It is a notion of political theology, denoting the pre-monastic ascetic formations of the Desert Fathers and Mothers that flourished in the fourth century in the Egyptian desert. Drawing from literature, and carrying out what he calls a "novelistic simulation of some living spaces," Barthes develops his ideas about a community in which every member has the right to live according to her or his own rhythm, without being expelled by the group. The lectures are an "ethical enquiry (how to conceive of the relationship between the subject and the other)," and they are also a moral study "on the condition that we invest the word with a concrete and practical dimension." Claude Coste, "Preface," in Barthes, *How To Live Together*, xxi.

29
Ivan Kologrivof, *Essai sur la sainteté en Russie* (Bruges, 1953), 430. Quoted in Kallistos Ware, "The Way of the Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative?" in *Asceticism*, eds. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

30
Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *Toward an African Future: Of the Limit of the World* (Living Commons, 2013). Living Commons Collective is an experimental publishing imprint run by philosopher Denise Ferreira da Silva and theorist Rashné Limki. It is "set amid and apart from neoliberal practices wherein sterilization of thought is lucrative business and from autonomist practices that have ceded themselves a peculiar racial valence," and its output is "a reflection of the inherent counter-disciplinarity of thinking." It traces "the political as constituted across the various modes of the creative and the material, that is, the ideational, the emotional, and the spiritual."

31
T. J. Demos, "A Colonial Hauntology: Vincent Meessen's Vita Nova," in *Postcolony*: *Spectres of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (Sternberg Press, 2013). See also Gauz, "Les Rêves de Kong de Binger," in *Penser et écrire l'Afrique Aujourd'hui*, ed. Alain Mabanckou (Seuil, 2017), 182–88.

32
Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*.

33
Maniragaba Balibutsa, *Les Perspectives de la pensée philosophique Bantu-Rwandaise après Alexis Kagame* (Editions Université Nationale du Rwanda, 1985), 14. My translation from French. My full translation of *Les Perspectives* is forthcoming in 2019.

34
Balibutsa, *Les Perspectives,* 13. My translation from French.

35
Maniragaba Balibusta is a late Rwandan philosopher whose last known position was Maître de Conference at the University of Omar Bongo in Gabon. His main philosophical contributions are in the field of contemporary Rwandan philosophy, resting on two primary works: *Les Perspectives de la pensée philosophique Bantu-Rwandaise après Alexis Kagame* (1985), a study that attempts to further Kagame's linguistic and philosophical work; and *Une archéologie de la violence en Afrique des grands lacs* (Editions du CICIBA, 2000), an anthropological and philosophical analysis of violence in Rwanda and neighboring countries. In his more philosophical work, Balibusta, like Kagame, insists that the Bantu languages reveal ontological structures that defy Western paradigms. Some saw Balibusta as one of the intellectual leaders of Hutu culture before 1994.

36
Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (*Leçons sur la philosophie de l'histoire*). Available in English as *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Volume 1: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–3*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown, William G. Geuss, and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford University Press, 2011).

37
Hegel, *La Raison dans l'histoire,* trans. Kortas Papaioannou (Éditions Plon, 1965), 185. Available in English as *The Philosophy of World History*, ed. and trans. John Sibree (Dover), 1956.

38
Dismas A. Masolo, "Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledge: An African Perspective," in "Oral Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge," special issue, *Africa Today* 50, no. 2 (Autumn–Winter, 2003), 21-38, 23.

39
Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Le philosophe africain comme traducteur" (African Philosopher as Translator), lecture at the Collège de France, May 2, 2016 http://www.college-de-france

.fr/site/alain-mabanckou/sym
posium-2016-05-02-09h40.htm.
Published as Souleymane Bachir
Diagne, "Le philosophe africain
comme traducteur," in Alain
Mabanckou, *Penser et écrire
l'Afrique aujourd'hui*. My
translation from the French.

40
Syrotinski, "The Post-Genocidal
African Subject."

41
Our hosts included artist Epa
Binamungu, philosopher and
musician Fr. Fabien
Hagenimana, cinematographer
Georges Kamanayo, philosopher
and historian Abbé Vedaste
Kayisabe, mythologist Rose
Marie Mukarutabana, sculptor
Jean Sebukangaga, artist Crista
Uwase, and architect Marie
Noelle Akingeneye Uwera.

42
Aloys Bigirumwami was the first
African Bishop of the Belgian
colonies and the sixth African
Catholic Bishop. He was born in
1904 and died 1986. He was an
adept thinker and pedagogue,
who worked tirelessly to reunify
the Rwandese people in his
lifetime, in the realms of
politics, theology, and culture.
His enormous corpus of
manuscripts published by the
diocese of Nyundo focuses on
the tradition, thought, and
locution of Rwanda. He is
credited with building schools
and hospitals in Rwanda, and for
promoting girls' education in
general, including the first
secondary school for girls, and
the first and only remaining
school of art, l'École d'art de
Nyundo.

43
Jean Paul Martinon, *After
"Rwanda": In Search of a New
Ethics* (Rodopi, 2013), 279.

44
Martinon, *After "Rwanda,"* 280.

45
Christiane Chaulet-Achour,
"Writing as Exploratory Surgery:
Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to
Violence,"* in *Yambo Ouologuem:
Postcolonial Writer, Islamic
Militant*, ed. Christopher Wise
(Lynne Rienner Publishers,
1999).